

What About Gambling?

By Pastor Kelly Sensenig

Introductory Remarks

After the American Civil War, the managers of the infamous Louisiana Lottery approached Robert E. Lee and asked if he'd let them use his name in their operation of gambling. They promised that if he did he would become rich. Astounded, Lee straightened up, buttoned his gray coat, and shouted, "Gentlemen, I lost my home in the war. I lost my fortune in the war. I lost everything except my name. My name is not for sale, and if you fellows don't get out of here, I'll break this crutch over your heads!"

In 1776, George Washington issued a general order to his troops: "All officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers are positively forbidden playing at cards and other games of chance. At this time of public distress, men may find enough to do in the service of their God and country without abandoning themselves to vice and immorality."

In our state of Pennsylvania this past week gambling was legalized by the liberal agenda. This goes to show us that when liberals are voted into office they do liberal things! And all God's people said, "Amen!" If you vote for liberals, you get the results of liberals in office. As Christians we are to support those men who are promoting good and seeking to do what is right. The Bible says we are to be the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world" (Matt. 5:13-14). We can't be salt and light when we are promoting the agenda of evil men who are seeking to destroy morality and decency in our nation. Why would we want to vote haters of God into office and evil men who want to promote abortion, gambling, gay marriages, and the handing out of condoms in the schools. I think it is a tragedy when Christians stand by men who are outright ungodly!

Actually, gambling was already legalized in this state when the lottery program came to Pennsylvania and betting on horse racing. W.C. Fields once said: Horse sense is a good judgment which keeps horses from betting on people." Someone else said: "A slot machine is a steel trap for catching dumb animals."

It should be no surprise that the slot machines would eventually follow the gambling racket that is already in our state. When you start breeding an environment for sin more sin follows. Pennsylvania is supposed to have more slot machines than any other state in America except the state of Nevada. This is a crying shame for this state. Today I need to address the subject of gambling for what it is. It is a sin and a reproach on any nation. It is also a sin for the child of God. The Bible does not say blessed is the nation whose god is gambling. It says, "Blessed *is* the nation whose God *is* the LORD: *and* the people *whom* he hath chosen for his own inheritance" (Psalm 33:12). **When a state legalizes gambling it is legalizing sin!**

Proverbs 14:34 says, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin *is* a reproach to any people." Gambling eats away at the heart and fiber of the nation's righteousness and is an influence that will continue to corrupt and hurt our nation. We must remember that the inward spiritual corruption of Rome caused its fall. Gambling was a big part of this great empire of the past and became an adverse influence that caused it to go over the precipice. Gambling is a serious evil in our land. It affects the vast majority of the people in our nation. Up to 95% of Americans have gambled and it has devastating effects.

People often say, "But there are going to be good things that come out of gambling." Really? Atlantic City, New Jersey, reported a 25 percent increase in street crime in its first two years of legalized gambling. Offenses like murder, assault, and armed robbery increased. Herbert Jenkins, former president of the International Association of Police Chiefs, stated that ten dollars was spent fighting problems directly related to legalized gambling to every dollar received in gambling taxes. Such crimes as prostitution, embezzlement, bad checks, and police corruption all increased. Racketeers and mobsters swarm to gambling communities. In fact, the mob is often behind gambling and Christians who gamble can eventually give their money to the mafia.

Although it may appear relatively harmless, society pays many hidden costs related to gambling. Compulsive gambling and addiction affect people in every age group. Teens seem especially susceptible to this addiction, as 1.3 million of them gamble compulsively. Gambling has always been closely related to other social pathologies

as well, such as alcohol and drug abuse, crime, prostitution, fraud, theft, embezzlement, bankruptcy, and pornography. In a sense, they all are stirred together in the same melting pot of sin. You will find that where there is an escalating preoccupation with gambling, there is usually an escalating involvement with every other kind of sin. Two-thirds of young people in Alberta, ages 12-17, are gamblers. Today clinics or treatment centers are set up across America to help people deal with teenagers and others who become addicted to gambling.

Along with gambling goes an increase of drinking, broken or ruined families, and crime in general. With gambling divorce rates are high and family breakup is common. This is because the gambler squanders all the family's resources. In some ways they are worse than alcoholics. Children don't have the food, in some cases the wife doesn't have what she needs to run the household, and then the children sometimes turn to crime. The daughters may turn into prostitutes to get the money to pay the bills. 1 Timothy 5:8 says, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

Some state governments spend more than 300 million dollars annually in lottery advertisements. Don't talk to me about the good things that come from gambling. Even if good things would come out of gambling, such as budget cuts, decrease of taxes, or donations to charitable organizations, the end never justifies the means! It's never right to do wrong in order to do right! There are still those who say, "Let us do evil, that good may come" (Rom. 3:8). History repeats itself again and again and only godless leaders who hate God and what is right promote gambling that ruins the lives of people and society at large. Gambling is a stench in the nostrils of God. Gambling always corrupts society. It just brings in a wave, a sea of corruption; and we are in the middle of it right now. The lie that is used to promote this evil in our society is that legalized gambling doesn't promote crime and will lower taxes. Actually just the opposite is true. Gambling promotes other vices which attract the criminal element. This results in higher, not lower taxes, as the cost for additional policing must be increased.

What Is Gambling?

Webster defines gambling like this: “to play at a game of chance for money or other stakes; to stake or risk something of value, as money, on the outcome of something involving chance; to lose or squander by betting.” Gambling is the greedy attempt to exploit or take advantage of others through games of chance, luck, and fate. Gambling is the desire to get something for nothing. It is the attempt to exploit others for one’s own greedy profit and is essentially a transaction whereby one person’s gain is someone else’s loss.

People sometimes try and confuse the issue of gambling by claiming that certain acts are gambling even though some essential elements of gambling are missing. Some people will say, “Everything in life involves a gamble. How about walking across the street or driving a car?” This confuses a risk with gambling. Not all risks involve gambling. These acts involve no wager and no stakes. There is no agreement to try to take someone else's possessions.

Some say owning a farm or business is gambling because one risks losing money. But again there is no wager and there is compensation. There is no agreement to take other people's property without compensation or payment. The intent of a business is to produce goods or services of benefit to others in exchange for that which benefits us. This is expressly authorized in Scripture and becomes part of functional society. Jesus was a carpenter and Paul a tent maker but they surely did not gamble away money at the expense of others. Some think buying insurance is gambling. But again, there is no wager and there is compensation or payment for services. No one agrees to gain at the expense of someone else's loss. On the contrary, the whole purpose of insurance is to compensate the insured if he does have a loss (such as death, car wreck, hospitalization, etc.). If no such loss occurs, the customer has purchased the peace of mind of knowing he would have been compensated if he had experienced a loss.

How about investing in stock and the stock market? Many say this is gambling. But what is stock? Stock is a means for people to become part owners of a company. Buying stock is no more inherently gambling than is ownership of any other business. The intent is to

make a profit by producing something of benefit to customers. Investors receive their share of these profits in the form of dividends or increases in the value of the stock. Further, when stock is sold, both buyer and seller agree on the price. There is no wager or no prior agreement to risk loss at another's expense. If either thinks the price is unfair they refuse to deal. Buying stock does not constitute gambling. It can involve some risks but not at the expense of exploiting others. In short, none of these above examples constitute gambling, since no one necessarily wants uncompensated losses to occur. However, the greedy gambler always wants financial loss to occur, because he hopes to profit from those losses – the losses of others.

How about raffles? Raffles are simply a form of the lottery where people buy a ticket to win a prize that others help to purchase with their own profits. So in winning a raffle you are taking the money of others and hoping to better yourself at their expense. This is the same thing as gambling. If someone says that a raffle "Is for a good cause," then why not just make a donation and skip the gambling! The reason is this. People want to gain the money of other individuals. How about fair booths where you pay to spin a wheel and try to win a prize? How about pitching nickels and dimes to win dishes? In these cases, you really gamble your money away and try to win a prize that others have paid for through their gambling. Essentially this is gambling.

I know these games are played for entertainment and fun prizes but what are we really teaching our children about gambling and what message are we sending to the younger generation when we play games of chance at the expense of others? I have never personally allowed my children to participate in these types of entertaining games because I want to teach them a principle about gambling. Someone may argue, "Gamblers and those who play fun games of chance are just paying for a form of entertainment." However, in legitimate entertainment the entertainers are paid a predetermined fee for providing a service to others. So if gambling were legitimate entertainment, then all the participants should be paid for what they do and get equal amounts. But the gambler does not want the other players to profit; he wants to profit at their expense!

How about matching quarters for cokes or coffee or playing marbles for keeps? How about athletic leagues where winners are not awarded a trophy or plaque but instead the players put money into a "kitty" then play to try to win some of the money. Essentially this is a form of gambling. Even when small amounts of money are involved such activities still violate Bible principles. We should set an example for our children and the future generation to avoid all types of gambling. Furthermore, when we gamble on a small scale we establish a precedence that makes it impossible for one to consistently object to other people's gambling.

Where do you draw the line and say, "This much money risked is all right, but any more is immoral?" Let me mention here that entering free sweepstakes or drawings are not sinful as they are advertising ploys paid for by the sponsors – not by the public. They use these to advertise their products while giving their customers an opportunity to win in a drawing. There is no gambling involved since the participants give no money for a chance to win the prize.

How about the Biblical practice of casting lots? Is this gambling and can it be used to support the gambling habits of today? Some people want to justify gambling as a modern counterpart to "casting lots," and say that "casting lots" was approved in the Bible. Therefore, the Bible affirms the role of gambling. Lots were actually made of a sheep's knucklebones and functioned very much like dice. They were the ancient dice. In some cases, these ancient forms of dice were used to gamble. But this does not mean God was advocating gambling by the casting of these lots.

The Israelites did use the casting of lots to determine God's divine will. They were used in the Old Testament to make decisions that would be honoring to God. Lots were used to select animals for sacrifice in Leviticus 16:7-10. Lots were used to select Saul as King and choose soldiers for battle and to divide the land. Lots were cast in the Old Testament to identify Jonah as the man who caused the storm (Jonah 1:7). Lots were also used to identify that Achan had stolen the loot and buried it in his tent. Lots were used to distribute the sons of Aaron into the priesthood and also to determine the priestly rotation in office (see 1 Chronicles 24). Lots were also used to determine who had the privilege of living in Jerusalem (Nehemiah

11). Lots were used to determine many specific things but the Biblical use of lots never constituted gambling. At no time in the using of those lots was anyone ever exploiting someone else's money and seeking to gain money without labor. The use of lots was not costing anyone anything, so it was not a gambling use of lots.

In the New Testament, lots were cast to select Matthias to replace Judas (Acts 1:21-26). The only other place in the New Testament where lots were used is at the foot of the cross, where the soldiers used lots or rolled the dice to see who would get which part of Christ's clothing. In actuality, this was not even a gamble because none of them had paid to play. No soldier was taking any risk, nor was he getting an advantage at someone else's loss who was in the game. No one was going to win at another's expense. They were simply trying to determine who got the robe and all of this was prophesied to take place according to Scripture.

One writer sums it up like this: "This example of casting of lots would be similar to what we call today "drawing straws." Even though the word "lottery" comes from the word "lot," casting lots and contemporary lotteries are qualitatively different activities, the former is based on the working of God's sovereign purpose through His providence, and the latter on an imagined luck."

Proverbs 16:33 says this about the Biblical use of lots, "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof *is* of the LORD." The people would put the lot in the garment and shake it around in the garment but every decision was ultimately from the Lord. Lots were simply a way in which the sovereign God providentially revealed His will prior to the completion of the Scripture. This is similar to the way God used the Urim and the Thummim, which was on the breastplate of the High Priest, to reveal His will.

Another author summarizes it like this: "God used lots in order to show people His will. When a decision needed to be made and there was difficulty in understanding the mind of God about it; God intervened providentially to control how those lots fell, in such a fashion as to reveal His will. It was the sovereignty of God that determined the lay of the lot. One thing, however, is very clear:

casting lots was not gambling, nor can the practice of gambling be justified in any way from the Biblical use of lots.”

I am not going to mix any words in this study. This is because I am on the side of truth and the truth must be fearlessly taught no matter what people think or how people respond. Arthur Pink once said: “The minister of Christ is not sent forth to please or entertain his congregation, but to declare the counsel of God, and not merely those parts of it which may meet with their approval and acceptance, but all the counsel of God (Acts 20:17). If he deliberately omits that which raises their ire, he betrays his trust. Once he starts whittling down his divinely given commission there will be no end to the process, for one class will murmur against this portion of the truth and another against that. The servant of God has nothing to do with the response which is made to his preaching; his business is to deliver the Word of God in its unadulterated purity and leave the results to the One who has called him, and he may be assured at the outset that unless many in his congregation are seriously disturbed by his message, he has failed to deliver it in its clarity.”

God says in Isaiah 58:1,
“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.”

The Church has to be faithful in addressing this disturbing sin. The Early Church certainly was. The first century church excluded gamblers from the church. One sermon that was preached in the second century is clearly seen to denounce gambling. It has stayed in existence until now and gives us a great insight into how the second century church viewed gambling. We don't know who the preacher was but here are some inserts to the sermon:

"Christians, great and abundant is the Lord's mercy! Satan's temptations are numerous but the principal ones among them are idolatry, fornication, theft, extortion, greed, fraud, drunkenness, impatience, adultery, murder, jealousy, false witness, lying, envy, wrath, slander, heresy, and a thousand other crimes like them, and of this number is gambling. The game of dice is an obvious snare of the devil. Stop being a dice player and start being a Christian before

Christ and beneath the gaze of the angels, and in the presence of the martyrs. Cast your money upon the altar of the Lord. "

Augustine said, "The devil invented gambling." John Calvin outlawed gambling in the entire city of Geneva. Martin Luther said, "Money won by gambling is not won without self-seeking and sin." The early puritans spoke out strongly against gambling. Wesley preached against what he called the "damnable sin of gambling." So did Finney, Moody, Torrey, and multitudes of others throughout the history of the church. Listen to what Billy Sunday said this about gambling:

"You sow your bridge, whist, pitch, and five hundred in the home, and you reap a crop of gamblers. You sow the dance and the ballroom and you reap a crop of brothels. You sow taverns and you reap a harvest of drunkards ... You must want a lot of prostitutes or you wouldn't sow dances. You must want a lot of vomiting, puking drunkards or you wouldn't sow taverns and you must want a bunch of gamblers or you wouldn't play cards in your homes ... If you have any cards in your home, you had better throw them in the furnace when you get back there or else throw your Bibles in the furnace. The two won't mix. Oh, you need not gasp: I am handing it to you straight. There is no use having Bibles around your house if you are going to make a joke of His Word by playing cards and gambling."

The Bible declares that it is wrong to bet money on the possibility of becoming instantly rich. Because gambling is a sin it must be confronted in our churches, in our communities, and in our own personal lives today. We ought to become aroused and condemn gambling even it is legal. We must return to the authority of Scripture and stop conforming to the whimsical standards of our liberal leaders, culture, and society (Rom. 12:2). People today say that gambling is not mentioned in the Bible. Yes, this is true. But neither are the words rape, suicide, or child pornography mentioned in the Bible. However, we know that the commands and principles of God's Word all condemn these sins and the sin of gambling.

There are at ten good reasons why gambling is a sin.

1. Gambling is wrong because it breaks the Tenth Commandment.

Of course, in our country the commandments don't mean very much any more. The radical liberals and godless politicians in this country want the Ten Commandments out of the sight of the public. They want to get rid of all the public displays of the commandments. We live in an unprecedented day of spiritual treachery and moral degradation where evil men and their godless ideas are being advanced on our society.

Exodus 20:17 says, Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that *is* thy neighbour's." Sin is transgression of the law (1 John 3:4) so if gambling breaks this commandment it is sin. Gambling is driven by the sin of covetousness. You will notice that the text says we are not to covet "any thing that is thy neighbors." This would include his money that he has thrown into the lottery jackpot or put into the casino slot machine.

Gambling is a clear violation of the Tenth Commandment. This is because in order to gamble you must possess a covetous spirit. Covetousness is when a person allows money and the desire to be rich to become a consuming passion or motivation in his life. Gambling promotes a form of covetousness in the heart of people. This cannot be denied. If you say that you are not a covetousness person, then why must you play the lottery and try to win the big jackpot? If you say that you are not a covetous person, then why must you play the slot machines and the other gambling paraphernalia that is promoted in the gambling stores? Your problem is that the spirit of greed grips your soul and you just don't want to admit it.

1 Timothy 6:9-10 says, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." What a warning this is to those who want to gamble! When you desire to be rich ("they that will be rich") and gamble you fall into the "temptation" and "snare" of the devil. Gambling is a snare that catches many people. This is why people are addicted to gambling and waist away

their money in the pursuit of greed. People who gamble create “foolish” and “hurtful” lusts, which for some will eventually bring them into the spiritual ruin of hell and damnation (“destruction and perdition”). This is because they lived for money and had no time for repentance and the salvation that Jesus Christ offers.

My family took a trip to an island just North of Atlantic City. As we were passing through Atlantic City we could see the famous Trump Tower and all the other gambling casinos. Beside them were places of poverty, drug addiction, and crime pits. This is what gambling eventually does to a society. On the side of one of the gigantic hotels was a picture of Trump set off in flashing lights. I thought to myself how futile all of this was. Here was a man who has his name in bright lights but was leading multitudes into destruction and perdition and foolish and hurtful lusts. Here was a man who was rich in this life but was not rich toward God.

Jesus said in Matthew 19:24, “... It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. Riches damn people to hell because they blind people’s eyes to the truth of their need for repentance and salvation through Jesus Christ. Their lust and greed keeps them from genuine repentance and salvation. Ephesians 5:5, “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.”

1 Timothy 6:10 should put a kibosh or end to all gambling in the Christian life – “For the love of money is the root of all evil.” Gambling is built on the sin of materialism and greed. It is built on the idea that whatever you have is not enough. The whole appeal of gambling is that you can get rich and need more material things. The love of money is just another phrase for materialism and gambling is built on the “love of money.” Gamblers are told to “Win money. Win money. Win money!” This is all you hear in the gambling crowd. Materialism or love for money is the whole thing behind gambling. Gambling appeals to materialistic lust.

The text says that that when a person has a love for money (gambling) they set themselves up for many more evils. In fact, they err from “the faith” which is the body of revealed truth that all

Christian are to believe and practice. Gambling is not in the “the faith” or the Christian creed of belief or conduct. At least it shouldn’t be! If you want to create more sorrow in your life than start gambling and see where it leads you to (“pierced themselves through with many sorrows).” Gambling and greed for money leads to a back alley where there is nothing but poverty, sorrow, sin, and devastation. Dear friend, believe God’s Word. It is true!

One such individual bet \$5 on a horse and won \$265. The excitement and thrill of winning hooked him on gambling. He said, “From that day on, my whole life revolved around gambling, I was hooked for the next three decades.” The life of gambling brought him to compile a debt of \$100,000. What started out as a one-a-week activity turned into a six-days-a-week compulsion. Gambling has an addicting affect on the lives of millions of people, which leads them into a state of misery. It’s been researched that those with incomes 25,000 dollars and below are the worst offenders of gambling. It’s not only rich people who gamble. Those who make less money are not exempt from the spirit of greed. In fact, gambling is built to cater to those who have little money so that they can be captured in the snare and gamble the rest of their lives.

1 Timothy 6:11 concludes by saying: “But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.” The man of God is not a gambler. He is not a covetous man. He is not a casino man or an Atlantic City man who plays the lottery and seeks a quick rich solution to life. Jesus said in Luke 12:15, “Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” Jesus reminds us that true happiness in life does not consist in paychecks, fringe benefits, or winning the lottery. True happiness is found in doing God’s will and putting eternal things before earthly things (Luke 12:31).

Jesus also said in Matthew 6:24, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” Gambling is a sin against God because it is mammon worship or the covetous desire to worship money and get rich. Mammon is the master of many people today and as gambling becomes more

legalized with slot machines it will master more people, even Christians, unless they take their stand against the mammon of unrighteousness (Luke 16:9).

2. Gambling is wrong because it breaks the Eighth Commandment.

Exodus 20:15 says, “Thou shalt not steal.” One again we must remember that sin is transgression of the law (1 John 3:4), so if gambling breaks this commandment it is sin. Think of this. When you gamble and win money you are actually stealing from others who have put their money into the giant jackpot. This is nothing more than a form of stealing. You don’t have to rob a bank to steal money from other people. You may reason that they willingly put in the jackpot. Yes, that’s why just last week in a convenience store I saw a lady purchase \$71.00 in lottery tickets. But the truth of the matter is this. If I win the lottery I get her money that she never intended to give to me. It was money she intended to get back. This is stealing. When we gamble our money we are in actuality stealing from one another.

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, in his book on “The Ten Commandments” said, “Gambling is stealing. The whole habit of gambling is of the essence of theft. It is a means by which men come into possession of property which is a violation of the laws upon which property may be held. A man who gambles puts into his pocket money for which he has done no honest work; and by the very act he robs the man from whom he receives it and violates the law of love.”

How very true this is! How can we truly love our neighbor when we steal his money? In Luke 10:27 Jesus spoke about the first and second greatest commandments. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.” How can you possibly love your neighbor if you are stealing his lottery money? In actuality, when we gamble we are not only stealing and breaking the eighth commandment but breaking the second greatest commandment that is to govern all our other relationships with people – loving our neighbor as our self. Gambling violates the command to love our neighbors because winners' revenues are necessarily funded by others who have lost. No man who loves his neighbor will steal his neighbor’s money in the lottery drawing.

Habakkuk 2:6 says, “Woe to him that increaseth *that which is not his!*” Ezekiel 22:12 says, “In thee have they taken gifts to shed blood; thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord GOD.” A Christian should not treat his neighbor in this way. When he tries to greedily steal and gain from his neighbor he is not exhibiting the love of God. Gambling is contrary to the Christian principle of self-sacrifice and service for others and is nothing more than greed and a form of thievery.

Gambling also exploits the poor of this world by robbing them of the little that they have. States who legalize lotteries and gambling are oppressing the poor for gain. Some studies indicate that the greatest number of lottery tickets are sold in low-income and ethnic neighborhoods in urban areas. Lottery tickets made available in grocery marts and drive-in markets make it easy for people to purchase the “chance to win the big hit.” Some spend money on the lottery tickets instead of groceries for their families. You can read James 5 and see how God feels about the rich who exploit the poor by robbing them out of their money (James 5:1-6).

Proverbs 22:16 also says, “He that oppresseth the poor to increase his *riches*, and he that giveth to the rich, *shall surely come to want.*” This is exactly what gambling is designed to do – rob the poor and give to the rich. This habit oppresses the poor people while the casinos take in multi-billions of dollars. Ephesians 4:28 sums it up well when saying, “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.” This brings me to my next point.

3. Gambling is wrong because it runs contrary to God’s command to earn money by honest labor.

As seen in the last verse quoted above work is a command from God and it is a gift from God (“let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing which is good” – Eph. 4:28). The Bible teaches the value of work or labor as the means to earn wealth. It does not advocate a quick-rich approach to living without working. In other words, we should never seek to live off the labors of others. We should expect compensation from others only as we work and produce something of

benefit for them (“the thing which is good” - Eph. 4:28). Gambling undermines the Biblical work ethic because, instead of accomplishing productive labor that benefits others, the gambler seeks to get something for nothing by taking what other people have earned. Gambling tries to get something for nothing and this defies the work ethic, which Scripture outlines. This is the whole problem in America today. The work ethic is lost. Everybody wants something for nothing. Essentially, this is what gambling is all about.

Consider some texts of Scripture in the book of wisdom, the book of Proverbs, which support a work ethic and speak against accumulating riches through other means. Proverbs 23:4-5 says, “Labour not to be rich (covetousness and gambling): cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for *riches* certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.” Every gambler knows about how riches develop wings and fly away. When a person is covetous and lives to only be rich he will find himself more often than not in the poor house. The first ten dollars turns into twenty, thirty, then forty dollars, and soon hundreds and even thousands of dollars fly away.

Jeremiah 17:11 echoes the same truth when saying: “As the partridge sitteth *on eggs*, and hatcheth *them* not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.” Jeremiah also talks about a “bag with holes” (Jer. 1:6). Proverbs 28:22 says, “He that hasteth to be rich (gambling, fraud, cheating on the income tax return, etc.) hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him” The Bible speaks against the “get-rich-quick” philosophy of living. Instead of allowing riches to consume our lives we should learn to work hard and be satisfied with our earnings in life. Proverbs 13:11 says, “Wealth *gotten* by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.”

The old saying, "Idle hands are the devil's playthings," is true. God didn't just give mankind work because it was good for Him. He gave mankind work because fallen people need to be preoccupied with something other than temptation. In Genesis 3:19 God said: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou

return.” God is saying that mankind is going to have to go to work. Proverbs 12:11 also promotes a work ethic, not a gambling ethic. “He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain *persons* is void of understanding.” I don’t believe there is a better example of following vain or empty things in life or chasing fantasies than gambling. Gambling causes people to despise work and to throw away their money like fools. Proverbs 13:22 says, “A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children’s children (grandchildren).” Instead of wasting his money chasing the god of chance a person ought to be setting it aside so that, as a good man, you have something to leave to your children and your grandchildren. Gambling destroys our work ethic and our ability to save money.

Of course, someone might claim that gamblers must work in order to win money at gambling but this is not the labor described in the Bible. Gambling is not labor because it produces nothing of benefit to others. Furthermore, it attempts to take what others have without compensating them. A thief also must do some labor; but such “work” is forbidden because it is harmful to others, not beneficial. If gambling were Scriptural labor, then all gamblers should be paid because all are laboring to win. Let’s not deceive ourselves. God’s blessing is upon labor or work as a way to earn money (Gen. 2:15; Prov. 6:6; 20:4). This labor principle is reiterated in the New Testament (Eph. 4:28; 2 Thess. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:8).

Such statements as these certainly conflict with the gambler's ideal of living. Jesus, Paul, and the disciples all worked normal jobs to earn a living. They were not covetous gamblers. Jesus was a carpenter, Paul a tent maker, and the disciples were fishermen. God has always promoted and blessed labor as the way to earn money and wealth. Proverbs 28:19, “He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain *persons* shall have poverty enough.” God promises to meet the needs of His people through honest labor. We do not have to follow Donald Trump’s advice and the world’s ideas about gaining money. If we do, in the end we “shall have poverty.”

A woman who lay dying said of her gambling husband: “When he wins, he drinks and stops work. When he loses, he is so disagreeable that there is no living with him and the children are afraid to come home for meals. And win or lose, there is never a penny extra for

clothes or shoes for me or for them, or for a bit of holiday for any of us. It is all sin and wickedness from beginning to end.” This is the true estimate of gambling.

4. Gambling is wrong because it runs contrary to experiencing contentment in your present state of living.

Philippians 4:11-12 says, “Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.” Paul knew that wherever he was, or in whatever circumstances he found himself, he was there by divine appointment. In spite of poverty or prosperity Paul experienced contentment in life. Contentment is something we learn as we grow in the Lord (“I have learned”). When we are content or satisfied in life we will not live for weekend gambling or keep wishing that we hit the big lottery someday so we can buy a bigger home and drive off into the sunset with a new sports car.

Gambling is built on discontentment. Gambling sows discontentment for the message of gambling says you never have enough; there's a lot more to get in life. This attitude is the opposite of contentment. 1 Timothy 6:8 states, “And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.” You will notice the text does not say “having food, raiment, and the jackpot.” No, we can learn true contentment in life no matter where we are at in our experience of living or no matter what our financial income or status might be at the present time. The secret to living the Christian life is contentment. Only God can bring contentment into our hearts and lives in spite of financial difficulty and lack of financial funds. This is because contentment does not revolve around money or financial gain. It revolves around a person – Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:21; 3:10).

Many of us think that if things are going right and if we are in the right place, then we will be content. However, this thinking means that we are depending on the circumstances of life for our contentment instead of the person of Jesus Christ. Paul's satisfaction and sufficiency in life were all found in Christ (2 Cor 12:9). It was not found in winning the jackpot or ten millionaire dollars in the lottery.

Paul found contentment through His relationship with Christ. He did not need to double his money on Friday night to find contentment. He did not have to win big at the horse races or his Saturday evening date with the slot machines to find true satisfaction in life. The contented man will truly believe and experience what Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone ..." (Luke 4:4).

Many Christians are guilty of supporting lotteries, bingo, horse racing, and even playing at the casinos. Video poker has become so popular it is now referred to as "the crack cocaine of gambling." Some do not realize the seriousness of their sin. They justify gambling simply because they have needs that cannot be met through their present earned income. But the Lord desires to meet those needs for them and will give them a plan for handling money if they seek him and His economic principles in the Bible.

In his beautiful book, "I Shall Not Want," Robert Ketchum tells of a Sunday school teacher who asked her group of children if any of them could quote the entire twenty-third psalm. A golden-haired, four-and-a-half-year-old girl was among those who raised their hands. A bit skeptical, the teacher asked if she could really quote the entire psalm. The little girl came to the rostrum, faced the class, made a perky little bow, and said: "The Lord is my shepherd, that's all I want." She then bowed again and sat down. She may have overlooked a few verses, but that little girl captured David's heart in Psalm 23. He had found contentment in his companionship and relationship with God.

5. Gambling is wrong because it keeps us from being a faithful steward.

1 Corinthians 4:2 states, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." Gambling violates God's commandments regarding stewardship. God entrusts people with time, talent, and treasures (resources), which He expects them to use wisely. The Scripture is clear. A faithful steward does not squander the money that God has graciously provided. Someone said: "The safest way to double your money is to fold it over once and put it in your pocket." God expects us to be a good steward of our money. The Bible teaches that everything is God's (Psalms 24:1 – "The earth is the

LORD'S and the fullness thereof"). Everything in the whole universe belongs to God. This includes our money (Deut. 8:17-18). Psalm 50:10-12 also says, "For every beast of the forest *is* mine, *and* the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field *are* mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world *is* mine, and the fulness thereof."

Since everything is God's we know that it's not ours to do with as we please. We should use the money God gives to us for His purposes and not our own personal agenda of greed and covetousness. God entrusts wealth or money to us as His children so that we can in return use it for His holy purposes. So as a Christian steward of finances we need to remember that our money should be used for God's proposes - not for our own fleshly cravings (2 Cor. 9:6). We can't gamble as a Christian because it violates the stewardship of money that God has entrusted to us.

One illustration that is most notable is found in Matthew 25:14-30. This passage needs to be addressed because it teaches a good practical lesson about finances. Jesus gives a parable of stewards who were given some property to manage by the estate owner or the home owner. The owner was going away and He wanted to see how they would manage what they were given. In short, he wanted to see what they did with their stewardship. When he came back he discovered that the first steward used his money (5 talents) to gain five additional talents and the owner was pleased (vs. 16, 19-21).

The second steward used his money (two talents) to gain two more additional talents. Once again the owner was pleased (vss. 22-23). The faithful stewards who received the five and two talents went out and traded. It means they went out and went to work. They went out and did some business, which included buying and selling, or investing, and whatever they did they doubled the owner's money. However, the third steward who was only given one talent hoarded his money and did not use the money to gain any additional money. This caused the owner to be filled with anger whereby he ends up judging the unfaithful steward (vss. 24-30). The steward who received the one talent went away and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. He didn't do anything. He just buried it in a hole and did nothing to gain additional funds. In verse 26 we see that this servant

was a wicked and “slothful” (lazy) servant. Why didn’t he multiply the amount? It’s because he was lazy and disinterested in using the owner’s money wisely. The point was this. He should have made something of the money entrusted to him.

The lesson is this. We are to be a good steward of our money and use it for God’s purposes. God is not content that we just keep what we have; He wants us to use it for His purposes instead of our own greedy end. Think of this. If God was not pleased with the servant for keeping what he had, and not multiplying it, what does God think about those people who waste it in gambling casinos and the lottery? When God gives His children a stewardship of resources in life, He expects us to use these resources for His glory and purposes.

Everybody who gambles loses their money. The few who win a little usually lose that later on. The worst stewardship of God’s gift, possible, is to throw it away at some god called Luck, Fortune, or the god of Destiny. This kind of use with our money is nothing less than idolatry and bad stewardship. God wants us to be developing a stewardship with our money that will glorify Him. Throwing money away to sheer chance brings Him no glory and becomes an irresponsible act of stewardship with God’s provision.

Oh, don’t be like the lady who told me that she would pay off the church if she wins the lottery. There are always those who want to justify their greed and covetousness by patting the preacher on the back with the promise that the church can be rich. Let us once again remember that the end does not justify the means. Furthermore, God can get along without your gambling money! Even Judas did not want his blood money after he had betrayed the Son of God (Matt. 27:3-5). The same should be true with those who want to bring their gambling money into the church. Gambling is a sin and God’s holy house does not need money that is gained by sinful practices.

I know there are those who say that the Devil has had the money long enough, so it’s time for God to get the money. But this is not a Biblical viewpoint. Money received by gambling is corrupted and not honoring to God. He does not need it for His purposes. Micah 6:7 asks this question: “Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?” In other words, the people

asked, “Why aren’t you pleased with us Lord? Is it because we haven’t done enough for You? Should we do more for You so that we can please You in a greater way?” The people were basing all that they did for God on the outward ceremony of giving instead of righteous and godly conduct in life. The point is this. *God wants our purity in life before He wants our pocketbook! God wants godliness in our life before He wants our gold coins.* This tells us that God is not interested in the jackpot that we might win at Atlantic City or the horse races. He is interested in our obedience and holy living. You could win the lottery and bring thousands of rams and ten thousands of rivers of oil and put it in the offering plate. However, God would not be pleased with your donation because He is not pleased with your life. God wants your obedience before your money. God requires us to live justly or do what is right before Him (Micah 6:8).

In Micah 6:10 we read: “Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure *that is* abominable?” “Treasures of wickedness” refer to the wealth they had accumulated in their unjust dealings with others. They were getting rich through slick practices and unfair treatment of the people. We discover a principle from this verse. God hates money that is accumulated through wrong means. He calls it “treasures of wickedness.” This would be a good label to place on money gained through the covetous practices of gambling instead of labor and good investment. Micah 6:11 also says: “Shall I count *them* pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?”

There were many who were ripping the people off and dealing unjustly with the rest of the people. They were being dishonest in their business practices. They were cheating their customers. We see by this statement that God wants nothing to do with money that is earned dishonestly and through sinful practices! Proverbs 11:1 says, “A false balance *is* abomination to the LORD: but a just weight *is* his delight.” The point is this. When money is earned through sinful and deceptive practices God is never pleased with it and He surely does not want this kind of money in His work.

6. Gambling is wrong because it indicates a lack of trust in God's sovereign ability to provide.

God has promised to meet all of our needs in life (Phil. 4:19; Matt. 6:25-33; 2 Cor. 9:8). This means that we do not have to revert to the sinful practice of gambling to have our monetary needs met in life. Many times we confuse needs with greeds and play the lottery or the slot machines to fulfill our greeds instead of our needs. I believe God knows what I need and I also believe that God will provide what I need. I can trust in God's provision for me that I can earn through work, through savings and through wise investments. We must understand that gambling is wrong because it rests on luck and not God. Gambling expressly denies God's sovereignty and provisional care over our lives. Christians are not to live their lives by faith in chance or luck but by faith in God's sovereign care and provision over their lives (2 Cor. 5:7). Gambling rests entirely on luck or chance - not God. Gamblers reject the working of God's divine sovereignty in the world.

Isaiah 65:11-12 says, "But ye *are* they that forsake the LORD, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop (gad - a god called fortune), and that furnish the drink offering unto that number (meni - a god called fate or destiny). Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose *that* wherein I delighted not."

These verses help us to understand how God views this matter of gambling which is nothing more than chance or luck. The background is this. The children of Israel were forsaking the true God for other god's that promised luck, chance or fate. Idols were actually worshipped that promoted luck or chance. This is a most interesting portion of Scripture. In essence, God says, "For you who spread a table for Fortune, and furnish the drink offering unto Destiny." These were evidently the gods they worshipped instead of the true God who was sovereign and in control of the events of their lives and who would provide for their lives. Preparing or spreading a table means bringing food to an idol. Furnishing the drink offering or filling bowls of mixed wine means bringing wine to an idol. These two gods that the people of Israel were worshiping was the god Fortune and the other was the god Destiny. If you want another name for the Destiny, it is "Luck or Chance."

One writer summed it up this way: Fortune comes from the Hebrew word "gad" and it means "luck." Destiny comes from the Hebrew word "meni" and it means "bad luck." "Gad" usually means "good luck" and "meni" means "bad luck." So, they were worshipping the god of Good Luck and the god of Bad Luck, and they were bringing offerings to the god of Bad Luck and offerings to the god of Good Luck. "Gad" combined as "Baal Gad" means "Lord of Luck," and they were worshipping "Baal Gad," the "Lord of Luck" as a part of their ancient worship of Baal. [Joshua 11:17, 12:7, and 13:5].

People are still worshipping these gods today when they go into the gambling casinos and play the lottery or gamble through other various methods. God says because you are bowing to Luck and Chance, I'll decapitate you! Isaiah 65:12 pronounces judgment and God's disfavor on those who worship the false gods of Luck. Listen, to believe in luck is to believe that God doesn't exist or that God is not sovereign. This is why I don't promote holidays that promote good luck or chance (Saint Patrick's Day) and take any stock in four leaf clovers and crossing my fingers.

As Christians we do not operate our lives on the basis of luck or chance. God does exist and since He does exist He is all-powerful, all-knowing and He is the creator and sustainer of the universe. He is the One who upholds everything by His own power and brings to pass His own will. There is no such thing as luck! Luck or chance is a pagan concept. Luck is non-existent and chance is non-existent. Things just don't just happen randomly by chance. God is in control of all the events of this world and allows everything to occur or take place that happens in this life and in your life.

As God's children we are not to gamble simply because it mocks God's sovereignty, which means He is in control of all the events of our lives, and that He cares and provides for our lives as His children. When we gamble we are in a sense bowing before the pagan gods of luck or chance, or good luck or bad luck, instead of acknowledging the true God who is in control of all the events of this universe. We are also acknowledging that the true sovereign God cannot meet our needs in life and that we need luck or chance to help us along in life. Gambling sends a message up to God that says He is not sovereign and that He can't meet my needs outside of chance of fate. If we

understand that there is no such thing as luck or chance, then why would we gamble?

Chance is nothing more than a type of superstitious witchcraft. Why do people refuse to step on certain lines and never walk under a ladder? Why do they carry a rabbit's foot or wear the same undershirt the whole season if it's their lucky undershirt when pitching the ball game? There is no such thing as luck. There is no such thing as chance. Rabbits can keep their feet! God is in control of the non-Christian's life, God is in control of the Christian's life, and God is in control of life itself. Depending on luck or the philosophy of chance is a form of idolatry. This is what Israel was doing as they were worshipping the gods of Luck and Destiny. Christians play into the philosophy and worship of chance or destiny when they play the slot machines and buy their lottery tickets. They worship the gods of change and fate.

Dear friend, whatever you have is not by chance. Whatever you have is from God. If God has withheld from you it's according to His purpose. If He has given to you that's according to His purpose also, and in the end it works into His plan. We know the One who is in control of the circumstances of our lives, and it is Not Lady Luck! Someone said: "For many Americans gambling has become a surrogate religion; a pathological hope; a concession to life based on luck; an admission that there is nothing to life but determinism, fatalism, nihilism."

7. Gambling is wrong because those who indulge in it promote darkness instead of light.

Ephesians 5:8 says, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye* light in the Lord: walk as children of light." 1 Thessalonians 5:5, "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness." It's a clear command of Scripture to hate the sins of darkness and express our love for the light or what is holy by refusing to participate in actions of darkness. Christians are to promote light instead of darkness. Ephesians 5:11 states, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*." As God's children and people we are to turn on the lights so the darkness can be diffused. We are commanded to walk in the light

of God's holiness and not walk in the darkness that is associated with this world system that is against God (1 John 1:5-7). When we gamble we are not walking in the light. Rather, we are walking in the darkness and running from the light. Christians are called to a life of holiness or separation from the world system that is against God (Rom. 12:2). They are to do what is right and represent light in the midst of the darkness of sin and evil.

An unknown author wrote:

Darkness stands for the Christless life
Darkness is hostile to the Light
Darkness stands for the ignorance of life apart from Christ
Darkness stands for the chaos of life without God
Darkness stands for the immorality of the Christless life.
Darkness is characteristically unfruitful.
Darkness is connected with lovelessness and hate
And darkness is the abode of the enemies of Christ and the final
goal of those who will not accept him.

With this being true why would Christians want to participate in the sinful and dark practice of gambling? Why would they want to play poker, gamble with cards, try their so-called luck at slot machines, bet on horse races, or play the lottery?

8. Gambling is wrong because it often places us with the wrong crowd.

2 Corinthians 6:17-18, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

The Bible clearly forbids uniting together with unbelievers in those places that are clearly promoting wicked and evil agendas. When we participate with gamblers in casinos or even over the Internet we are hooking up or uniting with the unsaved and are both adopting and promoting the "unclean thing" in our lives. When to attend the horse races to place our bet we are joining with the unsaved crowd who is seeking to promote wickedness and evil. God could not be any

clearer on this matter. We are to come out from among the hell holes of society that promote utter filth and wickedness and separate from the evil practices of the heathen of this world lest we promote and participate with the unclean things they promote. By the way, gambling is an unclean thing and is a form of idolatry today. God's people were never to participate or associate with idolatry or any form of pagan things.

Let me ask several questions at this point. Why would God's people want to promote and participate with those gambling atmospheres that glorify sin and wickedness? Why would they want to be part of something that is unclean and unwholesome? May God speak to all of our hearts about our association with such and evil practice of gambling and the people who are promoting and glorifying this idolatrous sinful practice.

9. Gambling is wrong because it becomes an addictive habit.

The dangerous and addictive nature of gambling should keep us from throwing the dice even one time. Gambling is a very addictive practice like using tobacco, drugs, or alcohol. However, God wants us to live free! He wants us to experience "the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21). Studies show that lotteries are the favorite legal gambling game for teenagers. Statistically, one of seven who play will become addicted. But teenagers aren't the only ones affected. One out of ten adults who gamble will become addicted too. In fact, gambling is the fastest growing addiction in America. Like alcoholism and drug addiction, compulsive gambling is costly to the economy.

Families are the ones who suffer the most. Indian reservations and the big gambling centers of Las Vegas and Atlantic City are taking in billions of dollars. Casinos rob those who play the games with them as the odds are stacked 80% to 90% in favor of the casino. Even those that do win big on occasion statistics have proven that within two years most winners have totally spent the money they won. This is because gambling is an addiction. Many compulsive gamblers wreck their lives and their families as they are encouraged to risk money that they usually cannot afford to lose. An estimated 15 million people are compulsive gamblers (2 Pet 2:19). They are brought

under the authority and power of gambling, which is something the Bible condemns (1 Cor. 6:12).

The wonderful thing is this. The Lord can bring deliverance to those caught in this web of compulsive gambling. Through admission of this sin and repentance God will break the bondage of it in those who desire to be set free. Gamblers must repent in order to be free. The Lord loves those who are addicted to gambling and will help all that call upon Him for deliverance (Luke 4:18; John 8:32, 36; 2 Cor. 3:17).

10. Gambling is wrong because no Christian can gamble to the glory of God.

The Bible says we should be able to do everything in life to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). This means we should live our life in such a way that God can be praised and honored with all of our activities. Can a Christian really gamble to the glory of God? Using money for God's glory means that we are to use money in a way that honors God's personal character of holiness and righteousness so in return God can receive praise and honor.

We can't gamble to the glory of God for it violates clear Biblical commands and principles in the Bible. It also violates the holiness of God and the Bible says we should be holy as God is holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16). Therefore, it is absolutely impossible to gamble and glorify God's name (Col. 3:17). We cannot honor God with our finances when we lack good stewardship and throw our money away to the god of luck or chance. God does not get any glory or praise when we misuse the funds He has entrusted to us and violate His holy character by playing games of chance.

Before closing this study I would like to ask you another question. Would Jesus gamble? Would Jesus go into a casino and gamble? Would Jesus buy lottery tickets if He were here and try to win the big jackpot? Would Jesus bet on horse racing and play cards, poker, and slot machines? If you say that He would you are grossly deceived. You ought to fall down on your hands and knees and ask God to forgive you for being so naive and for possessing a gambling or covetous spirit. God's children need to repent of their sinful gambling

habits. Without being sacrilegious about the Bible I close with the Gambler's Twenty-Third Psalm:

“Gambling is my shepherd. I shall want. It forceth me to lie down in prison cells. It leadeth me in the paths of unrighteousness for the Devil's sake. Yea, I will walk through the valley of the shadow of death because of this evil: for this fever is with me. Its rod and its staff they beat me. It taketh the food from my table in the presence of my family. It anointeth my head with trouble; my cup overfloweth with bitterness. Surely unhappiness and misery shall follow me all the days of my life, because I dwell in the gambling house and partake of government lotteries forever.”